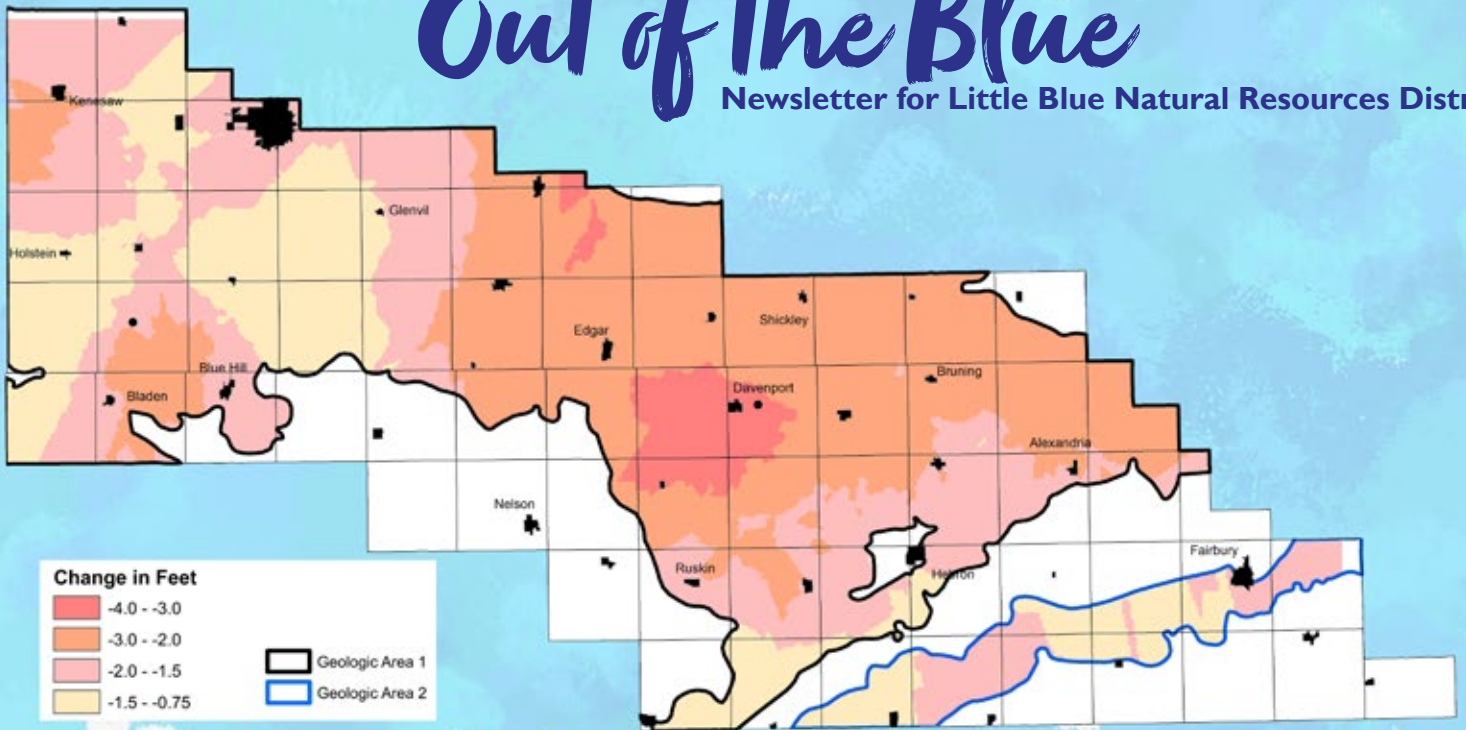


Out of the Blue

Newsletter for Little Blue Natural Resources District



2024 Spring Water Levels

This spring the water levels were measured in the month of April. The map above shows the changes between Spring 2023 and Spring 2024. This map shows a large majority of the district with declines. Hydrogeologic Area 1 was down -2.14 feet on average. Some of the hardest hit towns were Davenport, Oak, and just east of Clay Center. Hydrogeologic Area 2 went down -1.30 feet. Some of the hardest hit areas were around Reynolds and Fairbury.

In Hydrogeologic Area 1 with a drop of -2.14 feet, the weighted district average has dropped below the trigger level, which has led the Little Blue Natural Resources District (LBNRD) Board of Directors to impose an immediate stay, beginning May 14th, 2024, on the construction of all high-capacity irrigation wells and expansion of irrigated acres in Hydrogeologic Area 1. (See map of Stay Areas on next page.) Such a stay shall remain in effect indefinitely unless specific action of the Board dictates otherwise. Inactive wells, or wells that have no associated certified acres and are shown on LBNRD records as not having been in use for the previous three years may not be brought back into service. However, a variance can be requested to have an inactive well be considered as a

replacement well.

Exemptions for replacement wells include wells that pertain to human health, safety and welfare, or range livestock, or injection wells, including heat pump installations and groundwater remediation systems.

Irrigation projects for which the owner/operator have substantially completed may be allowed to be completed. Notification and documentation of substantial completion are required as proof of such completion.

During the time that a stay is in place, if the water source for certified irrigated acres is lost due to landownership changes, disputes, or other reasons, and no new acres will be irrigated, the affected landowner may apply for a permit to construct a well to serve the formerly certified acres, with no increase in acres.

In Hydrogeologic Area 2 with a drop of -1.30 feet, the weighted district average is sitting just 6 inches above the trigger level. Currently Hydrogeologic Area 2 has not gone into a stay, except for "Unit 8," which went into a stay on March 17th, 2006.

If the spring weighted average water levels in a water quantity hydrogeologic unit reaches or exceeds the groundwater quantity trigger level for that unit, and the water levels remain below the trigger level in the second consecutive spring measurement as well, mandatory




NOTICE TO IRRIGATORS

Little Blue NRD staff will be collecting water samples from irrigation wells M - F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from April 15th to October 15th. This effort is part of the NRDs mission to maintain an adequate supply of acceptable quality groundwater to forever fulfill the reasonable groundwater demands within the Little Blue NRD.

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groundwater allocations shall begin immediately for the then-current crop year for all high-capacity irrigation, municipal, industrial, recreational, and fish & wildlife users. If the second year's spring reading is above the groundwater quantity trigger level, the allocation of water will not be imposed for that year's crop season. Livestock users shall be exempt from allocations.

The full text of the Groundwater Rules and Regulations, can be found on the LBNRD website at littlebluenrd.org and at the Little Blue NRD office at 100 East 6th street, Davenport, Nebraska, 68335. (402) 364-2145.

Little Blue Elevates Enforcement In High Nitrate Areas

The Little Blue Natural Resources District (NRD) has taken a significant step in protecting water quality by elevating four areas with known high nitrate concentrations to Level III, its highest level of enforcement.

Background on Nitrate Concerns

Nitrates are a common contaminant in groundwater, often stemming from agricultural activities such as fertilizer use and animal waste. Elevated nitrate levels in drinking water can lead to severe health issues, including methemoglobinemia or "blue baby syndrome" in infants and potential links to certain cancers in adults. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets the maximum contaminant level for nitrates in drinking water at 10 parts per million (ppm).

Areas Affected

The four areas identified by the Little Blue NRD have consistently shown nitrate concentrations exceeding the EPA's safety threshold. These areas are:

1. Bruning Sub-Area: A 20 square mile

area surrounding Bruning.

2. Fairbury Sub-Area: A 32 square mile area surrounding Fairbury.

3. Deshler/Byron/Ruskin Sub-Area: A 92 square mile area encompassing Deshler and Ruskin, running south to the Kansas border, west of Byron.

4. Kenesaw/Prosser Sub-Area: A 38 square mile area near Kenesaw and Prosser.

Please see the map on Little Blue's website at littlebluenrd.org under the "Groundwater Management, Water Quality" tab for more detail on the aforementioned areas.

Highest Level of Enforcement (Level III)

The Little Blue NRD's highest level of enforcement includes several measures aimed at reducing nitrate leaching into groundwater. Key actions in these areas include:

1. Annual collection of soil samples and analysis on all fields shall be submitted to the District by April 1st of each year.

2. Commercial Nitrogen Fertilizer is prohibited prior to March 1st unless a nitrogen inhibitor is used.

3. Irrigation scheduling is required on all irrigated fields.

4. Operators/Landowners are required to adhere to the licensed soils test laboratory fertilizer recommendations, including all available nitrogen credits.

Community Impact and Response

The Board decision to elevate these areas to Level III reflects a proactive approach to

safeguard public health and preserve the region's natural resources. Local farmers and landowners are expected to face challenges in adapting to these regulations, but the NRD is committed to providing support and resources to assist with the increased requirements.

"We understand the burden this places on our agricultural community, but the long-term benefits of clean and safe water far outweigh the inconveniences," said Tyler Goeschel, Assistant Manager of the NRD. "Our goal is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve sustainable water quality improvements."

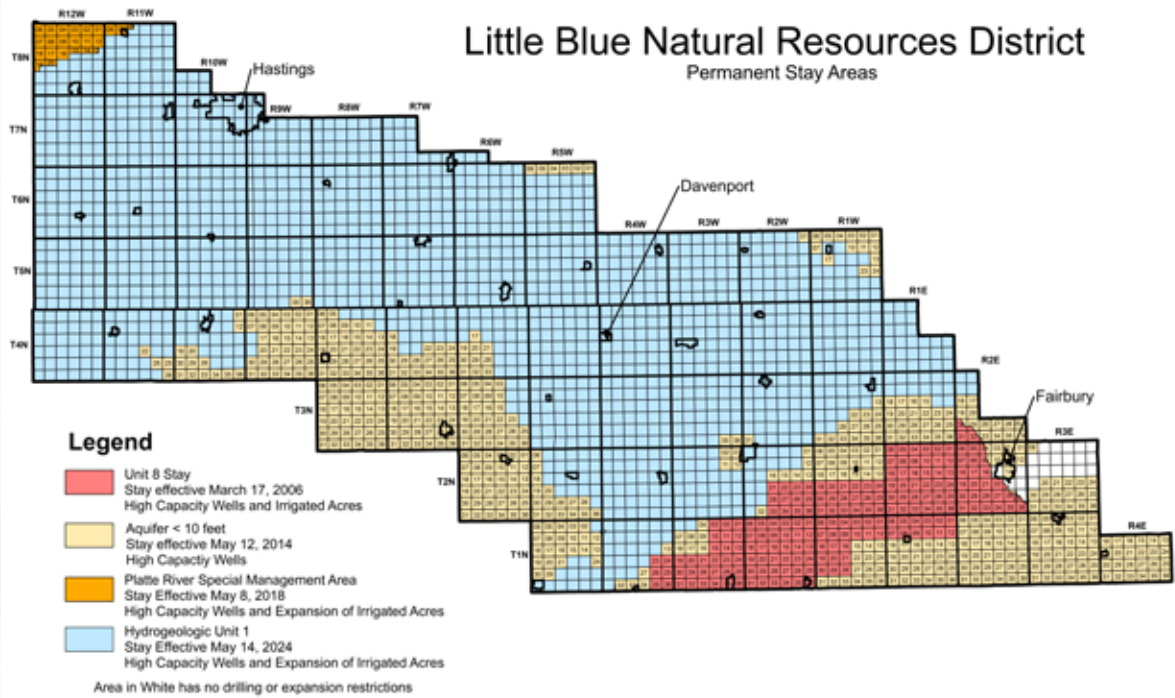
Looking Ahead

The Little Blue NRD plans to review the effectiveness of these measures annually and if nitrates continue to rise, the Board may impose other best management practices as deemed appropriate to protect groundwater quality.

Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate in public meetings and stay informed about ongoing efforts through the Little Blue NRD's website.

Conclusion

The elevation of these four areas to Level III underscores the Little Blue NRD's commitment to addressing the issue of nitrate contamination. By implementing the requirements mentioned above, the District aims to protect the health of its residents and the environment for years to come.



Arbor Day Presentations



Earth Day and Arbor Day offer an excellent time for staff to visit elementary aged children and offer them a parting gift – a free tree.

Five hundred and fifty-three total trees were distributed to five schools, with the ponderosa pines being the popular choice of the year. The point of focus during the presentations was the history of Arbor Day and the importance of trees.

If you are interested in adding a school to this tree distribution list next year, please reach out to Jessica Hedges, jhedges@littlebluenrd.org or call the office 402-364-2145.

Stretching Your Tax Dollars

From the Desk of the General Manager

No matter what side of the fence you are on, few people enjoy paying taxes. The Little Blue Natural Resources District (District) has always been aggressive at pursuing state and federal grants to bolster our budgets to expand the many programs and projects that we manage. This past year, the District secured over \$8 million dollars in grants to fund projects such as a new water source for our Rural Water Project, a flood control project to protect the Village of Kenesaw, programs aimed at improving water quality and quantity and cost share funds to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs). Currently, an owner of property that is assessed at \$100,000 pays \$17 per year in District taxes to fund not only the above items, but all programs and projects the District is responsible for. Additional items include public recreation areas, flood control dams, irrigation efficiency improvements, planting trees, wildlife habitat, agricultural cost share programs, and the list goes on. Many people agree that local government is key to improving and protecting our daily lives. Rest assured, our seventeen locally elected board of directors are fiscal conservatives who strive to ensure that your tax dollars are being used in an efficient manner.

New Employees Lindsay Eichelberger



In March of 2024 the Little Blue NRD hired Lindsay Eichelberger as a Water Resources Technician. She grew up in the area, living on a farm outside of Shickley until later moving to Geneva and graduating from Fillmore Central High School in 2011. Lindsay has an associate degree in business administration from Northeast Community College.

Before coming to the Little Blue NRD, Lindsay worked in construction and was the office manager at a pharmaceutical manufacturing company in Geneva. She has enjoyed the time as a Water Resources Technician here at the NRD and will start training for the Office Administrator position beginning in June.

Lindsay currently resides in Geneva with her two golden retrievers, Finn and Henry. She enjoys time with friends and family and spending the weekends at the lake.

Rhonda Peetoom



Rhonda currently lives in Fairbury with her husband, Stan. She enjoys traveling, camping and being outside.

Prior to coming to the Little Blue NRD, she was in the accounting dept for a pharmacy located in Beatrice. Rhonda is grateful for this opportunity and can't wait to get started.

Johnathan Novotny



Johnathan Novotny started working for the Little Blue NRD in January 2024. He graduated from the University of Arkansas. He recently moved from Las Vegas, Nevada to Hebron, NE.

Johnathan's passions are fishing, camping, kayaking and watching his son play hockey. He is very excited to join the Little Blue NRD Team.

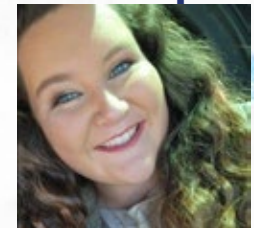
David Bergeron



David Bergeron joined the Little Blue NRD Team in March of 2024. He is one of three new technicians coming on board this year. He has 12 years of Agriculture Experience in his hometown of Yuma, Arizona. He has held jobs that, have taught him skills in the electrical, construction, and maintenance industries. He most recently came from North Platte, Nebraska. Where he was working as the maintenance manager of a car wash.

David is married. He and his wife Nikki, now live in Nelson, Nebraska. They have three grown children, with one of them still in college. They are settling in to their new life without the kids. Living in Nebraska affords them the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and be around good people. Dave is looking forward to learning new skills at the NRD and contributing to the excellent work that is being accomplished here.

Katie Lepant



Katie Lepant joined the Little Blue Nebraska Resource District in March of 2024. She was hired as the Field Office District Secretary in Clay Center.

Prior to joining the Little Blue Nebraska Resource District Katie was a Medical Laboratory Technician. Katie grew up in Hastings, Nebraska and now lives in Clay Center with her fiancé Chance and daughter Melody. She enjoys everything outdoors, camping, fishing, kayaking, and enjoys reading.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sub-District 1: Mason Hoffman, Roseland
Sub-District 1: Glen Bonifas, Roseland
Sub-District 2: Brent Hoops, Hastings
Sub-District 2: Courtney Luebben, Hastings
Sub-District 3: Jessi Hoeft, Hastings
Sub-District 3: Glen Bredthauer, Hastings
Sub-District 4: Lyle Schroer, Lawrence
Sub-District 4: Warren Taylor, Glenvil
Sub-District 5: Jesse VonSpreckelsen, Clay Center
Sub-District 5: Aaron Paus, Fairfield
Sub-District 6: Steve Shaw, Edgar
Sub-District 6: Kyle Knight, Clay Center
Sub-District 7: Alan Wiedel, Hebron
Sub-District 7: Alan Kenning, Hebron
Sub-District 8: Bill Glenn, Fairbury
Sub-District 8: Jay Meyer, Daykin
At Large: Russ Ochsner, Roseland

LITTLE BLUE STAFF

Scott Nelson - General Manager
Tyler Goeschel - Assistant Manager
Marie Herbek - Office Administrator
Kathy Boysen - Administrative Assistant
Alicia Epps - Database Specialist
Jessica Hedges - Media & Communications Specialist
Kevin Orvis - Project Manager
Tim Hecke - Operations Supervisor
Johnathan Novotny - Natural Resources Technician
Lindsay Eichelberger - Water Resources Technician
David Bergeron - Water Resources Technician

FIELD OFFICES

Adams County NRCS Secretary - Rita Peshek - 402-462-5412
Clay County NRCS Secretary - Katie Lepant - 402-762-3569
Fillmore County NRCS - Sylvia Jividen - 402-759-4017
Jefferson NRD/NRCS Technician - Christine Zabokrtsky
Jefferson County NRCS Secretary - Rhonda Peetoom - 402-729-6134
Thayer County NRCS Secretary - Jessica Hynek - 402-768-6228
Webster County NRCS Secretary - Lynetta Snelling - 402-746-2268

Upcoming Tire Recycling

July 31st: Clay County Tire Recycling
8am - 12pm | Clay County Fairgrounds

August 1st: Thayer County Tire Recycling
8am - 12pm | 873 N 4th St, Hebron

August 6th: Webster County Tire Recycling
8am - 12pm | 102 University, Guide Rock

August 7th: Fillmore County Tire Recycling
12pm - 4pm | Fairmont Air Base, Fairmont

Calendar

July 4th: Office Closed for Independence Day!

July 9th: LBNRD Board Meeting

August 13th: LBNRD Board Meeting

September 2nd: Office Closed for Labor Day!

September 10th: LBNRD Board Meeting

September 18th & 19th: Earth Jamboree

October 8th: LBNRD Board Meeting

October 14th: Office Closed for Columbus Day!

“Little Blue Natural Resources District is an Equal Opportunity & Provider.”

The Little Blue NRD's Out of the Blue is a publication of the Little Blue Natural Resources District. Requests to be placed on the Out of the Blue mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Jessica Hedges, Media & Communications Specialist, 100 East 6th Street, PO Box 100, Davenport, NE 68335.